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es z. B. in Frankreich nach 1871 auffallend getan hat. Und das grosse Problem wird nicht das der Schüler, sondern das der geistig gerüsteten Deutschlehrer sein. Vorbild und Anregung sind dann erst recht deutsche Lehrer vom Geiste Max Walters.

Harvard University.

**F. Schoenemann.**

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### **Status of the Direct Method in the Western States, as Revealed at the N. E. A. Meeting in Portland.**

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In planning a program for the modern language conferences at the N. E. A. meeting of July, 1917, the first thought was to begin where the conferences in New York City the year before had left off, and continue along the same lines. But when it was realized that the attendance at these meetings is largely local, that idea was abandoned. One reason was that the speakers who had been present in New York were not to be in Portland, and the audience was to be entirely different. Another reason was that it could not be taken for granted that the Portland audience would be familiar with the proceedings in New York, and a campaign of publicity would have to precede the meeting. That, added to the task of securing a program, seemed too big a bite for one time. So it was decided to proceed independently, particularly as the Pacific States were not yet organized in harmony with the national federation movement.

The ideas around which it was sought to have the papers and discussions grouped were: (1) the university training and the later growth of the teacher, (2) extension both downward and upward of the modern language curriculum, (3) the direct method of teaching, (4) suggestions for arousing interest, (5) devices for increasing efficiency, and (6) the problems of organization and standardization. In other words, the plan was to cover the main points of real interest.

It was felt to be particularly important that the exhaustive study of the problem of university training now being made by the Modern Language Association of America should be brought to the attention of teachers not acquainted with the proceedings of that Association, in order to stimulate interest in the forthcoming report. It was also considered well worth while to have the subject of the teacher's training presented independently in a paper, and discussed freely, in order to disclose present conditions and future possibilities. The revelation of the widespread and rapid development of teacher training and practice teaching in recent years in the West was one of the most encouraging surprises of the con-

ferences. But the most gratifying revelation of all was the firm footing which the direct method has gained in this part of the country.

The question of the method to be employed when the downward-extended curriculum should be inaugurated was raised by the chairman at the beginning of the first meeting, and, as one would naturally expect, the direct method became from that time on the topic most eagerly discussed. The desire to have a show of hands on the question became so general and so insistent that the chair in the end put the question, "All who are in favor of the direct principle of teaching as opposed to the indirect principle will please raise their right hands." The vote in favor was unanimous.

This triumph of the direct principle did not mean a conquest of new territory; it was only a discovery of territory already quietly conquered and waiting for the fitting opportunity to declare its new allegiance. Moreover the triumph was more complete in theory than in practice. A still unsurmountable barrier was frankly recognized in examinations set by school and college authorities who continue to test the knowledge of applicants by means of translation from English to the foreign idiom, and the reverse. The high school teachers present felt that until direct-method examinations are set by those in authority a considerable amount of practice in translation must be afforded their pupils. But they protested feelingly against the compulsion, which seriously impairs their teaching.

The discussions brought out the fact that the teachers were not a unit in their conception of what is meant by the direct method. Some thought they were thoroughly orthodox direct-methodists, but found their orthodoxy questioned by others. However, no one confessed himself or herself to be a true disciple of any particular prophet. Sects were not mentioned. Discussion was confined to principles, which suggests that perhaps the ground has been gained by personal propaganda, rather than by published articles and books. It looks as though college and university men had been working hand in hand with secondary-school teachers. Inasmuch as hearty co-operation between these two groups is the *conditio sine qua non* of real progress, the future looks bright.

Uniformity in definition of terms could not well be expected, especially in the newer, thinly populated states. Teachers, as a rule, college as well as high school, read too little of the pedagogical literature in their special field. At our conferences all shades of belief in the direct method were expressed, from the radical, who would tolerate no word of English in the classroom after the first few lessons, to the liberal, who would make some concessions, to save time and to utilize what he considered a few good features of the indirect method. But there was no division of opinion

whatever as to the superiority, both in theory and in practice, of the direct principle in general.

The attendance was made up chiefly of teachers from Washington, Oregon, and California, though some had come from the Mississippi basin, even as far east as Ohio. All told there were about 150 teachers who attended one or more of the sessions. Judging by these teachers, it may be said that either the West is thoroughly progressive, or only progressives thought it worth while to attend the N. E. A. conferences.

Stanford University.

**William A. Cooper.**

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## **The Standardization of the Vocabulary in Beginners' Books.**

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Many minds are keen to find a fitting name for a method of teaching and to lay down definitely its guiding principles. It is only when one attempts to standardize the details that they balk. To me, the future development of modern language method lies in just this standardization of details and in doing a great deal of drudgery in sifting and sorting and organizing the basic material in harmony with generally accepted principles.

The need for standardization was borne in upon me recently by a study, undertaken with students, of the vocabularies of ten German beginners' books. All of these books were modern and all more or less directly influenced by the magic of the master whom we delight to honor in this Festnummer of the Monatshefte. I was at least surprised to learn that the total number of different words occurring in the ten books exceeded 5000, and I was amazed when less than four per cent. of that number was common to them all. Even if one added words of eight and nine appearances, the percentages rise but slowly. By far the greater number of words appear in less than five of these representative books. Yet all these text-books aim at a similar goal, to initiate the beginner into the study of the foreign language and prepare, in the last analysis, for intelligent reading. Does it not seem strange that in a set of books standing for the kind of teaching that first realized there was the problem of the vocabulary, that less than 200 words are found common to them all?

If you will grant that what authors are striving for is to produce an ideal text-book, that shall be the composite effort of the best minds, then there is a lot to be done in the matter of the vocabulary. I admit the task of choosing the vocabulary for a beginners' book is not an easy one. There are so many things to be considered. If, however, our chief concern is to prepare pupils for intelligent reading, and I for one think that it is, then it would seem best to start early teaching what we may